

CHAPTER XXIII.

DENTISTRY.

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Dentistry was a "side line" of the early physicians of Concord, though very few of them attempted anything more than the extraction of aching teeth. Occasionally they may have been consulted by patients as to the adjustment of a set of artificial teeth purchased at the grocery store. As late as 1837 artificial teeth were advertised with groceries and medicines. In the *New Hampshire Patriot* of October 28, that year, is an advertisement of John McDaniel, who sold groceries and medicines, which reads as follows:

Incorruptible enamel teeth, pivot and plate, with various shapes: gold foil, white bronze, copper bronze, silver bronze for sale cheap.

At this date there were dentists in town, and very likely they assisted in adjusting the plates to the mouths of the purchasers. That there were traveling dentists early in the nineteenth century who visited Concord is apparent from advertisements that appear in 1826, when a Dr. Parsons, surgeon dentist from Boston, announces that he will visit Concord for six days, and a little later another surgeon dentist makes a similar announcement. The first dentist to settle in Concord was Dr. Elijah Colby, who was a graduate of the medical college at Hanover in 1823, and the same year began practice as a physician in the East village of Concord. His first patient was Mrs. Ruth Bradley (Eastman) Staniels, mother of Charles E. Staniels, still living at East Concord at an advanced age. Dr. Colby appears to have taken up dentistry as a "side line" to the medical profession. The earliest advertisement of him as a surgeon dentist is in the *New Hampshire Patriot* of October, 1826, where he "informs the public that he continues to set teeth and to perform all necessary operations usually connected with this line of business at his room at Mr. Lang's in the East Village of Concord." It would seem from this that he had practised dentistry for a time, and it may be that he gave particular attention to this profession from the time of his settlement in East Concord in 1823. In June, 1828, an advertisement in the *Statesman* gives notice that Dr. Colby, surgeon dentist, has a room at the Eagle Coffee House during the session of the legislature;

and in October of that year he advertises that he will call on patients. Dr. Colby practised medicine and dentistry in Concord until 1838, when he removed to New Bedford.

Dr. Colby had no rival in the profession except the traveling dentists until the coming of Moses T. Willard about 1834. Dr. Willard had an extensive practice and was without competition for several years. He was afterwards mayor and postmaster of Concord. Who was the next arrival is not clear. In 1845 Dr. D. P. Wilson advertised as a dentist, and the next year Dr. William W. Hurd put his advertisement in the Concord papers. Dr. Hurd was one of the "Mystic Five," a local association formed about this time, which had an annual meeting and dinner for fifty consecutive years without a break and with no death in its membership. In 1847 Dr. William W. Fletcher settled here and remained in active practice until his appointment as fish commissioner in 1874. After this his practice was inactive, and in later years he removed to Philadelphia. The same year that Dr. Fletcher settled in Concord Dr. Henry D. White opened an office in Fisherville, where he remained until into the eighties, when he removed to Concord. In 1849 Dr. Willard took a partner in the person of Dr. F. A. Noyes, who remained in the partnership for about two years, and then went to Boston. In 1850 John W. Little, M. D., has an advertisement as a dentist in the Concord newspapers, in which he gives as his references "those in this city and vicinity for whom I have worked since March, 1843." Except this advertisement there is no record that Dr. Little was in Concord before 1850.

In 1855 Dr. Ezra E. Worthen advertised as a dentist and gave as his reference Dr. Willard, with whom he undoubtedly studied, for in the earliest notice that is found of him as a dentist he gives his residence with Dr. Willard. Three years later Dr. George S. Fife and Dr. Justus Blaisdell advertised as dentists. Dr. Fife announced that he extracted teeth by electricity, and Dr. Blaisdell the next year advertised that he extracted teeth with the aid of electricity or ether, and gave testimonials from the parties who had been operated upon at his hands. Another addition to the profession in 1858 was Dr. David D. Smith of Penacook, who, after practising a few years in that village, removed to Philadelphia, where he became a lecturer and member of the faculty of the Philadelphia Dental college. The latter part of 1859 Dr. Eben G. Cummings opened an office in Phenix block. He graduated from a dental college in 1855, and was the first graduate to practice in New Hampshire. Before this time the dentists of the state studied in some dentist's office, observing his practice. Dr. Cummings came from Lancaster to Concord. As

showing the great expense of dental work when he was in Lancaster, contrasted with the present time, Dr. Cummings says that it then took forty cords of wood to pay for an upper set of teeth, when now two cords would pay for the same thing better done. He was the first dentist in Concord, if not in the state, to use adhesive gold in filling teeth.

In 1861 George A. Young came to Concord and formed a partnership with Dr. Cummings, which lasted for nearly twenty years, when a dissolution took place, and the two have since continued practice separately. Dr. Cummings was active in assisting to organize the first dental association in northern New England,—the Merrimack Valley Dental association,—and Dr. Young was one of the first members admitted after organization. This association afterwards became the New England Dental society, and is now known as the North-eastern Dental association. The Merrimack County Dental society was the outgrowth of this larger organization, and was formed sometime in the sixties after a meeting in the office of Cummings & Young, at which Professor William H. Atkinson, of the New York Dental college, lectured.

In the next twenty years the additions to the profession in this city were Dr. John E. Murphy and Dr. Charles N. Towle, who were in partnership for a brief time in 1867, or until the death of Dr. Murphy; Dr. James H. French, who settled in Penacook in 1876 and died there in 1895; Dr. Oker E. Nettleton, whose stay was brief; Dr. John M. Fletcher and Dr. Edward B. Davis, who opened offices in Concord in 1879. Dr. Davis was the first native of Concord who practised dentistry in this city. Dr. Fletcher began the study of dentistry as early as 1849, but abandoned it because of lack of opportunity, and resumed it a decade later. He practised in Franklin and Bradford before coming to Concord, and has been granted letters patent on several appliances now in use by the profession.

During the last two decades the additions have been Dr. George N. Johnson, Dr. James M. Rowe and four sons,—Eugene A., Edward W., Frank H., and Forrest C.,—Martin E. Young, who died in 1894, Edmund H. Albee, Charles R. Morton, Louis I. Moulton, Arthur L. Parker, John H. Worthen, Charles W. Coolidge, Henry E. Johnson, George E. Rowell, Paul R. Duckworth, Edward S. Cummings, and William A. Young. Some of the foregoing were here but a brief time, while others have become identified with the city's interests. In the nearly eighty years since the first dentist settled in Concord great advance has been made in the work of the profession. Formerly dentistry was a luxury of only the well-to-do. Now the dentist is a necessity in almost every household, and consulted as commonly

as the family physician. The dean of the profession here is Dr. Eben G. Cummings, who has been in practice in this city forty-three years, while closely following him in point of time are Dr. George A. Young, who has been here forty years, and Dr. Charles N. Towle, who has thirty-four years to his credit. For a period of nearly ten years these three were the only dentists in Concord.